



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

**Chair Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX)
of the Subcommittee on Environment**

Subcommittee on Research and Technology &
Subcommittee on Environment Hearing:

Calm Before the Storm: Reauthorizing the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program

Wednesday, December 4

Good afternoon. I would like to join Chairwoman Stevens in welcoming you to today's joint hearing between the Research and Technology, and Environment subcommittees on reauthorizing the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program or NWIRP.

NWIRP was established in 2004 to improve the understanding of windstorms and their impacts, and to work to mitigate those impacts in a cost-effective way. The overall success of this program can be attributed to its interagency approach, led by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, or NIST, which helps to streamline federal efforts and leverage existing programs and activities.

Windstorms affect all 50 states and many territories through severe weather events such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and thunderstorms.

Unfortunately, my constituents in Houston, Texas are all too familiar with high winds from hurricanes and the damage they can cause. In fact, the Saffir-Simpson hurricane wind scale used to grade hurricanes is based upon a hurricane's sustained wind speeds and its potential to cause loss of life and property damage. My home state of Texas is also familiar with tornadoes and strong thunderstorms, which is why I am pleased to see that one of our witnesses, Dr. Delong Zuo, is from the National Wind Institute based at Texas Tech University. It is crucial that we understand and identify interdisciplinary research needs so we can improve the outcomes of NWIRP.

On the Environment Subcommittee we have already discussed many of NOAA's programs and activities that support the goals of NWIRP. The agency's windstorm related research falls largely within the categories of hurricanes and other local severe weather including tornadoes and thunderstorms. NOAA's operational role of providing windstorm forecasts and conducting post-

event assessments, and its commitment to improving the integration of research to operations, is also a vital part of meeting NWIRP's goals.

Programs such as NWIRP will also benefit from NOAA's ongoing efforts to improve the accuracy, lead time, and dissemination of weather forecasts through the implementation of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act and the recently established Earth Prediction Innovation Center, or EPIC.

Today's discussion will inform this Committee's work to reauthorize an interagency program that engages stakeholders across a variety of sectors, represented by our distinguished panel. I look forward to hearing from our non-federal witnesses how their organizations have successfully utilized the outcomes of the program, and their recommendations on how NWIRP can be improved. It is critical for this Committee, and Congress overall, to continue its work in evaluating and reauthorizing existing programs that have a successful track record of providing benefits to our constituents.

Thank you and I yield back.